

Learn How to Prep for a Media Interview



Get Tips On Mistakes to Avoid and Questions to Expect



BY RACHEL DEAHL | Updated July 08, 2017

It can be tough to [prepare for a job interview](#), in any field. Often it can feel like there's no sure-fire way to prepare for an interview since you never fully know what you'll be asked. But there are certain things you can expect to be asked in a media interview. Get information here about what you can do to prepare for media interviews.

Interview Mistakes to Avoid

Aside from making sure you [look professional](#) and you are on time -- two things you must do -- you want to make sure you've studied the right topics to ensure the interviewer doesn't stump you on any questions.

Although you shouldn't think of an interview as an antagonistic situation -- most interviewers aren't trying to test you or catch you off-guard -- you don't

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want to draw a blank when you're asked a question. For this reason, you should study up on a few things, and come up with answers to potential questions, before the big day.

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Questions You Can Expect

One of the biggest pet peeves you will hear editors and hiring managers complain about, when it comes to interviewing, is talking to candidates who don't know their company or their publication. This doesn't mean that if you're interviewing at an imprint of [Random House](#) you need to know the history of the publisher. However, if you're interviewing at, say, [Knopf](#) (a literary imprint at Random House), you should know some background on the division. What kinds of books does Knopf publish? Who are its authors? What are your favorite books that Knopf has published?

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The theme of knowing where you're interviewing carries over to various facets of media. When I was interviewing for jobs out of college, mostly editorial assistant positions at magazines, I knew about those magazines. I knew generally the general topics they covered, and I had studied them.

Therefore, when I was asked questions like, 'What's your favorite section of the magazine?' I had an answer at the ready.

Other questions that might have stumped me, had I not prepared, were: 'What's one thing you would change about the magazine if you have the opportunity?' And: 'If you were going to write a story for us tomorrow, what would it be about?'

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To answer any of the above questions

about a publication, you need to know it inside and out. It won't do to simply know that [Sports Illustrated](#) covers sports or that *Entertainment Weekly* covers entertainment. You need to know specific stories the magazine published recently and you need to know the recurring sections of the magazine. ([The New Yorker](#), for example, devotes its front-of-the-book to shorter pieces about a wide array of topics. This section is famous and it's called "Talk of the Town." Now if you strolled into an interview at *The New Yorker*, and didn't know what "Talk of the Town" was, you'd probably blow your chance of getting the job.)

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How to Make Sure You Have the Right Answers

The best way to prepare for a media interview is, as I said above, to [study your potential employer](#). If you're interviewing for an [editorial spot](#) at a magazine, grab a bunch of back issues and go over them. Decide what you might change, if you had the chance. Figure out the sections you like, and decide why you like them.

Find stories you like and take note of them. (You don't need to remember exact titles, but it will be a plus if you can.)

Another thing to be aware of, especially when you're going on a lot of interviews, is to avoid mixing up competitors. When you're interviewing a lot, you often have less time to prepare for things. And, moreover, the places you're interviewing may occasionally start to blend together. Try to separate.

You don't want to make the mistake of saying you liked a story that *SI* did when, in fact, it was a story that appeared in [ESPN The Magazine](#). Therefore, before the interview, pay particular attention to getting things like this straight in your head. One thing that notoriously drives editors and others in the field crazy is mistaking them for their competition.

Keeping Your Cool

One thing I always struggled with, during interviews, was my nerves.

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There's no question that interviewing is stressful, especially when you have the pressure of needing a job weighing on you. That said, you need to try and keep your nerves at bay.

The more nervous you are, the more likely you are to misspeak or get generally sidetracked. (One of my nervous ticks is talking too much, so I was always aware of this when I went into an interview. I had to pay special attention to make sure I didn't talk too much.) So, know what your nervous ticks are before the interview so you can keep them in check.

The other thing to remember is that, in the end, it's just an interview. If you can try to

keep things in perspective, and not put too much pressure on yourself, it's often easier to stay calm. Go in confident and calm. If you believe in yourself, and speak with confidence, employers will pick up on it.

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